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deal, we should judge, from the sort of sick-room atmosphere which is breathed round many of its pages, and from the serious and melancholy tone of sentiment which pervades it. There is truth and spirit in her sketches of character ; and her descriptions of visible objects are uncommonly fresh and picturesque. The picture of the parsonage at Broad Summerford, and of the persons and occupations of its inmates, is a very beautiful piece of still life. Portions of the story of Andrew Cleaves are told with a good deal of tragic power, and the character of the stern father is vigorously and consistently drawn. The fate of Blanche D'Albi is very touchingly and beautifully told. The lively and spirited sketches of the village congregation, in the third chapter, especially of Farmer Buckwheat and his family, show that her power is not confined to the plaintive and the tender, but that she has a delicate appreciation of the ludicrous, and a ready facility in the expression of it. The prominent defect of the work is, that the staple of her thoughts is spun out too fine. There are too many words. The same idea is repeated in a variety of forms. The style is sometimes careless and slipshod. We should judge that much of it had originally been written for magazines, where the main object was to cover as much space as could honestly be done. The last story, in particular, might be very advantageously condensed.

The moral tone of the book deserves unqualified praise, and it is so full of sensibility to every thing beautiful, and of sympathy with every thing good, that we close it with a feeling that the writer must be a very delightful person, and one whose society must be valued by her friends as no common privilege.

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9. — *Conjectures and Researches concerning the Love, Madness, and Imprisonment of Torquato Tasso*. By RICHARD HENRY WILDE. New York : Alexander V. Blake. 1842. 2 vols. 16mo. pp. 234 and 270.

AN air of elegant scholarship and refined literary taste pervades these volumes, which makes it difficult to consider them with the ordinary strictness of censorship. The subject alone commends itself strongly to all who have the least tincture of Italian lore. And Mr. Wilde's ingenious researches, eloquent remarks, and spirited and faithful translations, impart no small attractions to the work for the English reader. The mysterious story of Tasso's life, into which love, jealousy, and mad-

ness enter as springs of action, and which opens glimpses of a tale of romantic interest, — of a princess wooed and won by the daring passion of a vassal poet, (who breathed the secret to his Muse alone, and for that half-unwitting disclosure incurred the lasting coldness of the high-born lady, the slow but implacable resentment of her haughty brother, and the cruel punishment with which the offence was visited,) — the protracted imprisonment, the imputed insanity, and the touching verse and prose in which the bard proclaimed his sorrows, and hinted at their cause, — this strange and moving history has excited the interest and curiosity of nearly three centuries, and is still as imperfectly known as at first. The clouds which hang over it only provoke more eager inquiry, tinted, as they are, with the most gorgeous hues of love and poetry. The copious materials which exist, and which seem at first sight to promise the entire solution of the mysteries, but, when more closely examined, only multiply questions, contradictions, and doubts, and draw still more closely the veil, perpetually incite one to fresh efforts to thread the maze. Documents affording more precise information undoubtedly exist, but they are lodged in secret archives, with doors doubly locked and barred by Italian pride, jealous of the honor of great-grandmothers. The whole matter is one of the most curious and interesting subjects in literary history, and the skilful treatment of it must be agreeable to readers in all countries and at all times.

Mr. Wilde has endeavoured to make the poet tell his own story, and, from the vast collection of his letters and minor poems, to cull out and piece together those personal allusions and statements, which may throw light on the principal incidents in his life. "Enough, it is imagined, may be gathered from his own pen to afford grounds of satisfactory belief, or at least of plausible conjecture." The correctness of this method, so far at least as the poems are concerned, obviously depends on the assumption, that bards are disposed to rhyme about themselves, and to tell their own stories with no greater admixture of fiction, than can be easily detected and separated by a scrutinizing observer, who has some means of collateral information. We question the justice of such a postulate. Poetry is acknowledged "cloud-land," and he must be a seer or diviner of no ordinary powers, who can distinguish the dim outlines of truth under those vast and magnificent wreaths and foldings. He was a poet himself, who affirmed, that "what we call imagination is little more than strong feelings and vivid recollections," and we will not admit that there is any thing more than poetical truth in the statement. In the first sonnet of Tasso translated by Mr. Wilde, the bard exclaims,

“*True* were the loves and transports which I sung,
And over which I wept in varied rhyme.”

The translator supposes, that literal truth is here spoken of, while we hold, that the bard intended only a sort of poetical verity. That was a *true* affection, which Othello felt for Desdemona, but it was by no means an *actual* one ; for the noble Moor himself, and the Venetian senator's daughter, are only figments of the poet's brain. In the lines quoted, Tasso may have spoken in his own person, or he may have identified himself with some ideal character, and affirmed the reality of sorrows quite as imaginary as Desdemona's passion for the Moor. Unquestionably a true poet's song grows out of his own inmost feelings, and rests upon the incidents of his actual life ; but these feelings and incidents are moralized by him “into a thousand similes.” The truth, in his hands, becomes a riddle, of which he only holds the key. To maintain, that others can see the fact under the fiction as well as himself, is to believe that he writes prose instead of poetry. Shakspeare's sonnets were probably dictated by some prominent incidents affecting his internal life, and contain the history of his feelings ; but no one has succeeded in reading that history so clearly as to remove any part of the blank in the poet's biography,—that blank, which is so wide, that, in posterity's view, the matchless bard seems almost to want personality,—to be a mere embodiment of the dramatic muse.

But the interest of Mr. Wilde's volumes does not depend wholly, or even in great part, on his success in the investigation. He leads us along a path so green and flowery, that we care not where the journey may end, or whether it comes to any definite termination. The work contains much elegant disquisition, and the comparison and criticism of the poet's various biographers are no less entertaining than instructive. Much ingenuity is shown in comparing and weighing the different branches of evidence, and many collateral facts are established, that form agreeable additions to literary history. Translations from the poet fill a considerable portion of the book, and appear to us to possess very remarkable merit. Tasso's letters are rendered into very graceful and flowing English, in which hardly a trace of their foreign origin can be discerned. A number of the sonnets and amatory stanzas are translated in verse, in a manner that shows a fine perception of the delicate beauties of the original, and great power of preserving them in smooth and elegantly finished rhymes. This is high praise ; but we believe that the two following sonnets, taken almost at random from a number possessing equal beauty, will be found to sustain the commendation in the opinion of our readers.

"Three high-born dames it was my lot to see,
 Not all alike in beauty, yet so fair,
 And so akin in act, and look, and air,
 That Nature seemed to say, 'SISTERS ARE WE!'
 I praised them all, — but one of all the three
 So charmed me that I loved her, and became
 Her bard, and sung my passion, and her name,
 Till to the stars they soared past rivalry.
 Her only I adored, — and if my gaze
 Was turned elsewhere, it was but to admire
 Of her high beauty some far-scattered rays,
 And worship her in idols ; — fond desire,
 False incense hid, — yet I repent my praise
 As rank idolatry 'gainst LOVE's true fire." — Vol. I. p. 17.

"Til L'AURA comes, who now, alas! elsewhere
 Breathes, amid fields and forests hard of heart,
 Bereft of joy I stray from crowds apart
 In this dark vale, 'mid grief and ire's foul air,
 Where there is nothing left of bright or fair,
 Since LOVE has gone a rustic to the plough,
 Or feeds his flocks, — or in the summer now
 Handles the rake, — now plies the scythe with care.
 Happy the mead and valley, hill and wood,
 Where man and beast, and almost tree and stone,
 Seem by her look with sense and joy endued.
 What is not changed on which her eyes e'er shone?
 The country courteous grows, the city rude,
 Even from her presence or her loss alone." — Vol. I. p. 21.

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10. — *Fragments from German Prose Writers. Translated by SARAH AUSTIN. With Biographical Sketches of the Authors.* New York : D. Appleton & Co. 1841. 16mo. pp. 353.

MRS. AUSTIN's rare merits as a translator do not require to be heralded in our pages. She has done more, perhaps, than any living writer, to bring the German mind into contact with the English, and to exhibit the former in its true lineaments and proportions, — not softened down into a vague image, in which all the salient points of the original are lost, nor yet heightened into bold caricature, or copied with slavish and spiritless fidelity. A perfect mistress of German idiom, she possesses entire command, also, over the stores of our own language, and the raciness and spirit of her English style would warrant her a high reputation as an original writer. The happily chosen words and turns of expression in a particular writer do not make so deep an impression on her mind, as to slip una-